

Testimony of Andrea Watson
in Support of HB6759 An Act Concerning Early Childhood

Senator McCrory, Representative Curry, Ranking members Berthel and McCarty and members of the Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB6759 An Act Concerning Early Childhood.

My name is Andrea Watson and I am the Early Head Start/Head Start Director at Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA). I live in New London and oversee programs throughout New London County.

I want to thank you for recognizing in section 1 of this bill that compensation for early educators is the issue facing the early care and education sector. The rapid increase in entry level wages throughout the economy has left early care programs struggling to retain and attract staff.

My program has struggled with the hiring and retaining of quality early childhood educators due to the financial compensation of employees. We have had to close a classroom for an extended period of time due to lack of staff. On a daily basis my program has been operating with minimal staff and has to close classrooms at short notice to families due to not having enough staff to operate the day safely. Without this infrastructure being added to the early childhood field I am very concerned that there will be major impacts to programs and in turn families will not have access to childcare.

What is missing from this bill is the way in which this will be paid for. I urge you to support increased funding for the state funded early care programs and the creation of a wage equity fund similar to what was created in Washington DC to increase wages for early educators without adding to the child care cost burden that families already face.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrea Watson